

FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR DEPLOYMENT

I. Need for Pre-Deployment Financial Planning

Why should you even bother having a financial plan for deployment? Here are three simple reasons:

A. Increase Spending Power - How many of you would like a 10% raise right now? You can give yourself one. By having a financial plan in place before you deploy that is flexible enough to follow closely both during and after the deployment, you should be able to increase your spending power by at least 10%.

B. Eliminate Stress - It is very difficult and stressful to handle financial situations from a long distance. If you have a solid financial plan prior to your departure, much of this stress can be eliminated.

C. Be Ready for the Future - If the financial plan works well during deployment, then why change a good thing? It will be easy to stick with it long after you return, and the next deployment will probably go much smoother financially.

II. Legal Considerations/Important documents

Part of your financial plan should include an update of all your important documents. Each personal situation is different and you may have a variety of different documents to review. We will cover a few of the most crucial.

A. Wills:

_ Everyone should have a will, whether you are single or married. If you have children, you will need to choose a guardian for your children should you die unexpectedly. See Navy Legal Services to have your will drafted. Your command may sponsor a “Legal Day” and have a Legal Officer come to assist people draft wills and powers of attorney. All of these services are free of charge.

_ Check page 2 of your service record to make sure your designation of next of kin is still correct. A large number of page 2's are inaccurate.

_ Make sure that the beneficiary designated for your Servicemen's Group Life Insurance policy (SGLI) is accurate. Funds will be paid to whomever you have listed so be certain to update this with a change in your family member status.

B. Power of Attorney:

_ A General Power of Attorney authorizes someone else to act on your behalf for the entire period of time indicated. It is recommended that you make the period for the length of the deployment or no longer than one year. The appointed person has the power to do anything on your behalf.

_ Specific (or Special; both terms are used interchangeably) Power of Attorney: gives someone else the authority to act in your behalf in one specific area—i.e., selling a car, buying a car, selling or buying a home, signing tax returns, etc. It is limited to the specific act noted on the document.

_ For single parents it may be wise to give a special medical power of attorney to your child care provider to handle any medical emergencies that may arise while you are deployed.

_ Make absolutely sure that you trust the person to whom you give any power of attorney. Many sailors have had their financial lives destroyed by people who abused the power of attorney privilege. A

general POA gives complete control in your personal decisions so be careful about trusting someone who does not have deep ties to you.

_ If you do chose to give someone a power of attorney, make sure it is current. Have Legal draft a new one before the next deployment (or at least once every two years). Many businesses are reluctant to accept an outdated POA.

III. Financial Planning/Budgeting

A. Planning Worksheet:

A workable and flexible spending plan (budget) is the single most important tool you will need to make your deployment a financial success. Good financial planning principles include determining where you are now and where you want to go financially. Once you know that, you can ask yourself how you are going to get there. Whether planning for a six-month deployment or a six-year saving plan, the principles are the same. Plan for the rewards of the best case scenario, prepare for the worst case, and track your progress according to your plan.

B. Adjust for Pay Changes:

_ Make budget adjustments for any possible pay changes such as sea pay starting or stopping, after the deployment, family separation allowance, pay increases with promotions, re-enlistment bonuses, etc.

_ Review your LES for a list of what allowances you are currently receiving.

_ Make adjustments for loss of your second income if you are working another job.

_ Take into account additional childcare costs. Many couples work alternate shifts to avoid child care and this will obviously change.

C. Be Realistic:

_ Budget as realistically as possible for expenses that you will have on deployment. Don't forget to include amounts for port visits, phone calls, souvenirs, a few meals off the ship, etc.

_ Married personnel need to budget realistically for each partner. There is nothing wrong with both of you conserving/saving some money during the deployment. In fact, you should try to save so you will have some extra money to spend when you get back together. However, allowances must be made for some recreation to allow everyone a break — both the individual on deployment and the family members back home.

D. Infrequent Expenses:

Budget for infrequent expenses such as; insurance premiums, car maintenance, home maintenance and tax payments, as well as regular monthly items.

E. Contribute to Savings:

_ Contribute regularly to a savings account if you haven't already done so. It doesn't matter what you save (\$10, \$25, \$50 per month)—it is the fact that you contribute to it regularly that counts! Setting up an "S" allotment is generally the best way to go. "Pay yourself first." Start saving by allotment before you deploy. This will make it a habit and help you to build a reserve.

_ If the non-deployed spouse has never worked with the family finances before, have him/her practice with your agreed upon system at least a month or two before the deployment, so you will have a chance to iron out any difficulties. Make it very clear that both parties understand beforehand exactly who will be paying what bills.

F. Overspending:

For those of you who have been deployed before, what kind of situations did you find yourself in when you may have gone over your spending limits?

- _ What kind of scams can you remember from your time in foreign ports?
- _ Comparison shop. Ask yourself if you can get the same item in the US for a lower price. Watch out for overpricing particularly near fleet landing locations. Many people succumb to the allure of buying overseas when in reality they may find a better quality and lower priced product at home. If you are having something wrapped, watch carefully to make sure they are wrapping the item you purchased.
- _ When we become lonely or depressed it is often easy to spend too much without even realizing how much we are spending.
- _ Buying gifts to prove your love for family, friends and sweethearts can get expensive. They may get more long lasting satisfaction if you send letters, tapes, photos, etc.
- _ Long distance phone charges from overseas can be very expensive. One guideline is to use phone calls to exchange emotions (expressions of love, letting everyone in the family hear each other's voice). Use letters or e-mail (if you have access) to exchange information (all the details of a child's birthday party, problems with the kids, schooling, the fact that the CV joints on the car went out and why it is costing so much to fix, etc.). One way to avoid overspending is to purchase prepaid phone cards with set time limits.
- _ Upon return, you may find yourself tempted to dip into your savings to satisfy your need for instant gratification or to fund lifestyle changes. Beware of this and think about your real reasons for spending.

IV. Banking Issues

A. Concerns for Single Sailors:

- _ Split pay is not just for married personnel. Consider estimating how much you will need each month during the deployment and then arrange to be paid that aboard ship. The rest stays in your account back home, leaving less temptation to overspend. You can always write a check if you really need extra for a special gift or a side trip during a port visit.
- _ Make sure your direct deposit is operating smoothly. Remembering to balance your checkbook properly becomes even more important on deployment, where lack of mail service may greatly delay receipt of bank statements. Consider leaving a "cushion" in your checking account at all times, or ask your financial institution about overdraft protection.

B. Concerns for Married Sailors:

1. Handling Finances:

- _ How you handle your finances as a family is up to you. There are several ways to handle things successfully. You may want to consider establishing a separate checking account for each of you with the same financial institution. Direct Deposit in this situation is ideal because you can arrange with the institution to have a set amount deposited into either checking account, with the remainder going to the other account. This may prevent confusion; you will each be responsible for keeping accurate records of your own account and there won't be any question as to who wrote which check for what amount.

2. Split Pay:

- _ If either spouse is unfamiliar with handling a separate account, or the couple wishes to avoid the hassle of more than one checking account, split pay may be the answer. Most of the money would go into the checking account back home, while the sailor has an amount available on ship each payday during the

deployment. One disadvantage of this method is that as monthly pay fluctuates, the non-deploying spouse's income will change. This can make budgeting more difficult.

3. "D" Allotment:

- _ Another option is a dependent or "D" allotment. This way the majority of the paycheck can be sent to the spouse as an allotment, with the sailor receiving the remainder in his or her account.
- _ The "D" allotment is sent to the spouse's checking account. This is particularly useful if a couple has different accounts at different financial institutions.
- _ One advantage of using a "D" allotment is that the spouse at home, who will normally be paying most of the bills, is guaranteed to receive the same amount every month, which is useful for budgeting purposes. Any fluctuations will occur in the deploying sailor's account.
- _ If you do decide on a "D" allotment, try to start it at least 60 days prior to deployment to let your budget adjust to the new financial situation.
- _ Check with your disbursing officer about registering an advanced "D" allotment, which eliminates the waiting period for the check. The advance is paid back over a six month period. Once it is in place, do not stop the allotment. Remember operational commitments could delay your homecoming, and once the allotment is in place it will make future deployments easier.

4. Types of Allotments:

- _ Allotments can be great tools for handling your cash flow. There are many different types of allotments that you can utilize for your financial plan, such as Dependent, Bond, Savings, Charity, Home, Insurance, etc.
- _ Personnel Support Detachment (PSD) will refer to an allotment as discretionary or non discretionary. A service member cannot have more than six discretionary allotments and no more than 15 total allotments. A discretionary allotment is a Dependent, Insurance, Savings or Home allotment, otherwise known as "DISH" allotments. Non discretionary allotments are all others such as Bond, Charity, Loans, etc.

C. Things to Avoid:

Although there are several good ways to handle finances on deployment there are also some ways that do not tend to work well.

- _ Splitting check pads between account holders in a joint account is usually not the way to go. Only if both parties are very organized and very well disciplined can this system work; otherwise it usually leads to confusion and, eventually, one or more bounced checks. This is the second worst method of handling finances on deployment.
- _ The worst method of handling finances on deployment is for the deploying spouse to keep the paycheck and/or the checkbook and to send money orders to the family back home. Mail service on deployment is frequently delayed and often unreliable. There is also the chance of loss, which would further delay money reaching the family.
- _ Whatever system you use, make sure both parties understand and are comfortable with it. It is usually best to try to get something that works both during and after deployment. Once your system is in place, it will eliminate some of the hassle and stress in preparing for the next deployment (particularly if it is a sudden one!).
- _ If there are any pay problems during the deployment, it may require contacting your financial institution, or DFAS in Cleveland, or both.
- _ Your financial institution will work with anyone whose name is on your joint account. However, DFAS will not give any pay information to a spouse (or anyone else) unless they first receive a faxed copy of a power of attorney authorizing them to do so.

V. Paying Bills

A. Paying on time:

Even though you will be away from home, there will still be bills back home that will need to be paid. Single folks may need to continue payments on car loans, insurance, and credit cards while married folks may have these as well as other family expenses. Paying bills in a timely manner so as not to adversely affect your credit rating can be a challenge while on deployment.

1. Allotments - Use allotments or automatic drafts from your checking account whenever possible to make payments (mortgage, car payments, insurance, etc.). See if your bank or credit union has any other automatic bill paying services you can use.

2. Notify Creditors:

_ For those bills you intend to pay yourself while deployed, notify creditors well in advance, so you know prior to departure that your bills are reaching you aboard ship.

_ Pay bills immediately when they arrive; even then, some payments may arrive late due to mail delays.

_ Keep creditors informed. Remember, you can't just automatically pay ahead on an installment loan, such as a car payment or credit card bill. If you pay three times the minimum or scheduled monthly payment for a large debt, you normally still owe the next (minimum) monthly payment, on schedule, the following month, unless you make special arrangements in advance with the creditor (get it in writing!).

3. Money Orders - Money orders are time consuming and require more record keeping. If using money orders, record the order numbers, dates, amount, who it is going to, and when mailed. Keep all receipts.

4. Trusting Others - If someone else is paying your bills for you, make sure you have complete trust, both in the person and in that person's ability to manage money in a responsible manner.

VI. Credit Issues

You may find that you will be using credit more frequently when on a deployment, either intentionally or unintentionally. As part of your financial plan for deployment consider the following tips on handling your use of credit.

A. Establish a Credit Record:

If you currently have a limited credit history, you may want to use the deployment as an opportunity to establish credit with an allotment, followed by a share-secured loan for a small amount. If you currently have a good credit rating, the best way to keep it is to make sure the bills are paid on time.

B. Plan Card Usage:

If you are married, decide who will be using which credit cards while you are deployed and stick to that plan! Visa is the most widely accepted credit card in most foreign ports, particularly in Europe. You may want to have access to several forms of payment (travelers checks, some cash, a Visa/Master Card, etc.).

C. Keep a Running Balance:

Keep a running tally of your credit card balance. Remember that bills may be delayed in the mail. Make sure you don't run up a bigger balance than you can afford to pay.

D. Hold on to Receipts:

Keep copies of all credit card transactions you make in order to minimize credit card fraud. Keep a close eye on your card; use all the normal precautions and look over your statements to make sure you recognize all the charges listed.

E. Exchange Rate Difference:

Using a credit card for a purchase will probably give you a better exchange rate than most places in town and may even beat the money exchange vendor on ship. Be aware, however, that the rate may be different (somewhat better or worse) when the credit card company bills you than when you made the purchase.

F. Phone Cards:

_ Understand the billing terms of long distance phone companies and their calling cards. The terms and rules are on the statement you get when the company first sends you the calling card.

_ Be certain to get a listing of country codes so that you know how to get through to places you want to call. You may wish to contact the issuer to ask about overseas usage and access codes (these often differ when calling from outside the US).

_ A good choice is to purchase the shipboard prepaid phone cards which allow you to use the phone onboard at a cost of \$1.00 per minute (often a lot less than calls made from the pier).

VII. Housing Concerns

A. Issues for Renters:

How many of you are single, living out in town, and are planning to keep your apartment while you are deployed?

1. Leases:

_ The military clause does not give a service member the right to terminate a lease just because he/she is deploying—only if PCS orders are received for more than 50 miles from the present duty station, or if the service member is discharged from the service.

_ Some landlords may be sympathetic due to the deployment and allow a service member to break a lease. That is an exception, not the law.

_ If your lease expires while you are on deployment and you do not notify the landlord of your intentions, usually the lease will automatically be renewed and you will be liable for paying rent, even if you did not want to renew the lease. Check this out before you deploy.

_ If you are sharing an apartment, it is wise to have your roommates sign the lease as co-tenants so if something happens, you won't be fully responsible.

_ If you have any questions about your lease, have a Legal Officer review it.

2. Payments:

_ Paying rent while you are gone: Make arrangements in advance with your landlord about how you will pay rent and what type of security is available for your apartment and its contents.

_ Remember that postdating checks is illegal in most states. If those checks are cashed early, the landlord's bank might clear them. If that happens, and the check bounces, you would have no recourse.

_ Leave self-addressed, stamped envelopes for the landlord to use to contact you in case of emergency.

_ Get any agreements in writing and keep copies of any receipts.

_ Make plans for keeping utility payments up to date. If your utilities are shut-off you will be required to pay deposits and reconnect fees to have them turned on again later.

3. Insurance:

_ Make sure you have renters' insurance for the contents of your apartment, (whether you are deployed or not). The cost to you will probably be between \$10 and \$15 per month at the most. Contact the company to let them know you will be out of town for an extended period to make certain you remain covered.

B. Issues for Homeowners:

1. Maintenance:

- _ If you have a spouse, make certain he/she knows the maintenance schedules for home items like the furnace, AC, etc. and is comfortable with making repairs.
- _ Leave a list of repair company phone numbers. If necessary, schedule in advance with repair services for regular maintenance issues.

2. Payments:

- _ One thing you definitely don't want is to fall behind on house payments. Creditors can and do foreclose when necessary. Check with your lender to set up a direct payment plan to ensure your payments will arrive on time.

3. Renting:

- _ You may consider renting out your home while you are away or allowing someone to live there free. There are some benefits to this since your home is not empty.
- _ Be certain to thoroughly check out any potential inhabitants. Run a credit check on renters to make sure they can pay the rent. Require a direct deposit to your account.
- _ It is also a good idea to use a rental agent when you are away so that they can be responsible to maintenance issues.

VIII. Vehicles

A. Storage:

- _ Decide where you want to keep your vehicle and who will take care of it. Leave them the name of a trusted mechanic or auto repair shop.
- _ One option to consider is long-term storage. Vehicle storage on base may be your safest bet. Long term vehicle storage may be as low as \$8.
 - 15/month and may include an optional monthly start-up.
- _ If you have proof of insurance, some storage facilities will provide you with a form to send to your insurance company to apply for a premium discount since you won't be driving your car during the deployment and their lot is insured and has security. They may also provide other services such as state inspection, tune ups, and car repairs.
- _ However, some lots do not provide monthly start-ups and don't provide applications for insurance discounts. Their lots may not be insured. Cars may only be parked behind locked chain link fence with only routine Base Security patrol.
- _ Keep insurance payments, tags and inspection stickers current. Contact your insurance company and let them know your car will be off the road. Most insurers offer an inexpensive coverage for this type of occurrence.
- _ If you decide to leave your car with friends, be sure to notify your insurance company of alternate drivers.

B. Maintenance:

- _ Have as much regular maintenance done as possible before you deploy; make sure the car will be ready for you when you get home.
- _ Married sailors need to ensure that their family has safe, reliable transportation while they are gone.
- _ Make sure your spouse has a list of any regular maintenance that will need to be done on the car, as well as the names and numbers of where you want it taken to have any maintenance or repair work done.

IX. Tax Issues

A. Free Services:

If income tax season will take place during your deployment, decide how you want to have your tax return completed. Tax assistance may be available, particularly on larger ships. At home, tax centers on base offer free tax preparation, including electronic filing.

B. Leave POA or Form 2848:

If either spouse wants to file the joint return, you need to complete and both sign form 2848 and leave it with the spouse preparing the return. A signed general POA will also be sufficient. Remember you may also need other paperwork such as: child care information, home mortgage interest, etc., to complete your return.

C. Electronic Filing:

This allows for a much faster refund. Remember, if you filed a joint return and have the refund check mailed to you, both parties must endorse the check. This can be avoided by having it directly deposited into a joint account (checking or savings).

D. Contact VITA:

If you have any questions regarding taxes, contact your command Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) representative, your CFS, or your Legal Officer.

E. Extensions:

_ If you want to wait until you return from deployment to do your taxes, you have an automatic 60 days (until June 15) without doing anything—just write “US Navy—Deployed outside CONUS” on top of the tax form when you do file.

_ If you need more time, you can file for a 4 month extension, but this request must be mailed by April 15th. Remember, both spouses must sign a request for extension.

_ **IMPORTANT:** An extension to file is not an extension to pay. If you expect to owe money, you will have to pay by April 15 or owe interest and penalties.

_ Do not forget about your state income tax return if your home state requires one. If your spouse is employed or if you had a part time job during the year before leaving on deployment, you may each have to file a State Income Tax return.

X. Financial Emergencies

A. Prior to Departure:

You can prepare in advance for these unexpected occurrences.

1. Emergency Fund:

_ Establish an emergency fund for unexpected expenses. It is recommended that you have a least one month's pay saved as an emergency fund to cover the possibility of emergency car or home appliance repairs, or sudden travel expenses.

_ Remember, if you have to return on emergency leave, the Navy will pay to get you only as far as the base—you must pay the remainder.

2. NMCRS Pre-authorization: If your spouse does not have a general power of attorney, go to NMCRS and fill out a pre-authorization form. This will allow your spouse to get limited financial assistance (up to \$2,500) in an emergency from Navy Relief without having to wait for your approval via message traffic. You will still be notified, and NMCRS must still approve the loan using their normal guidelines. For further information on this option, contact NMCRS.

3. Record Keeping System: Set up a record keeping system with names and phone numbers of repair people, warranty information, account numbers, etc., so this information will be readily available to your spouse or whoever may be handling your affairs.

4. Avoid EZ Credit:

_ If you have no alternate plan for a financial emergency, you or your family might be forced to depend on so-called “E-Z” credit sources, such as finance companies and credit cards.

_ Remember, in many states there is no law limiting the amount of interest that a merchant can charge you for financing a loan. During and after deployment, credit sources who say “We finance E1 and up” are frequently used as emergency funds. These are usually the highest cost option.

5. Leave Contact Information:

_ Make sure your parents or other close relatives have your complete, official mailing address and know your social security number. Also, make sure they know how to contact you through the Red Cross if there is an emergency.

6. Take Care of Paperwork:

_ Married personnel- make sure your family is properly enrolled in DEERS and TRICARE Prime, and check your family members’ ID cards to ensure that they will not expire during the deployment.

_ If your spouse or children will be traveling during your deployment, make sure your spouse knows how to get a care authorization from TRICARE in case they need medical attention outside the area.

XI. Sources of Help

If members of your family need any financial counseling or assistance, the following agencies can help. It may be wise to have their telephone numbers near the phone. You may want to highlight the following:

_ If you need any personal financial information or assistance, talk to your Command Financial Specialist or your Legal Officer.

_ Fleet and Family Support Center, 1-800-FFSC-LINE: a 24-hour hotline to answer concerns and to get help accessing emergency financial assistance through Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society.

_ Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) is a source for financial assistance during an emergency. They are able to assist with basic living expenses such as rent, utilities, food, medical bills, essential car repairs and emergency transportation. Every form of assistance is decided on a case-by-case basis.

_ American Red Cross is another important resource. American Red Cross can provide official verification of an emergency situation within the service member’s immediate family and transmit a message to the command. Red Cross cannot grant emergency leave. The Commanding Officer is the only one with the authority to grant or deny emergency leave. When a family member is sending a message, they need to include the name and relationship of the person the message is about, and the name of the doctor, hospital, or funeral home as appropriate.

Conclusion

_ With smart financial choices, you will have more control of your financial future rather than letting it have control over you. With a set of goals and a plan, you can make it happen!

_ The following sheets are attached for your convenience.

Financial Planning for Deployment Checklist

Legal Considerations

- ___ Do you have a will?
- ___ Is page two of your service record up to date with the correct beneficiary listed?
- ___ Is the correct beneficiary listed on your SGLI?
- ___ Do you need to leave power of attorney with anyone?
- ___ Do you need to leave a medical authorization with the person who is taking care of your dependent children?

Financial Planning

- ___ Do you have a written monthly spending plan or budget for the deployment? (Get a Financial Planning Worksheet from your CFS to get started.)

Does the budget include amounts for:

- ___ Port visits
- ___ Long distance phone calls
- ___ Gift/souvenir purchases
- ___ Savings for vacation after the deployment

Does the budget include amounts for possible income changes such as:

- ___ Sea pay
- ___ Family Separation Allowance (FSA)
- ___ Rate changes while deployed
- ___ Reenlistment bonuses or any other special payments
- ___ Do you have a savings plan to help you achieve your financial goals?
- ___ Have you considered starting an IRA or other long term investment program to build your wealth?

Taxes

- ___ If you plan to do your taxes while deployed, do you have all the records you will need?
- ___ If married, do you or your spouse have a Power of Attorney or Form 2848 signed by both of you?

Banking Decisions

- ___ Is your pay set up the way you want? (DDS to correct account(s)? Split Pay? Any Allotments or automatic check drafts?)
- ___ If married, do you both understand clearly how finances are to be handled during deployment?
- ___ If married, have you considered establishing separate checking accounts?
- ___ Have you considered joining a credit union?

Bills, Bills, Bills!

Who will be paying your bills while you are deployed?

- ___ Are there any once-a-year expenses coming up while you are deployed? Who will pay them for you?
- ___ How will you be making monthly payments to your creditors? Do they all have your correct address?
- ___ If married, have you decided who will be using which credit cards during the deployment?
- ___ Do you and your spouse both understand who will be paying which bills?
- ___ If you're renting an apartment, who will be paying the rent for you?
- ___ Will you have to pay utility bills while deployed? Who will pay them for you?
- ___ Is your renter's/homeowner's insurance current?

Vehicles

- ___ Do you have a safe place to store your vehicle and/or someone to take care of it for you?
- ___ Are vehicle insurance, tags, and inspection stickers all current?
- ___ Is all routine maintenance current, i.e., oil/filter change, etc.?
- ___ Have you left the name of a trusted mechanic/repair garage with your family?

Emergency Plans

- ___ Do you have at least one month's pay saved in case of financial emergency?
- ___ Have you considered signing a pre-authorization form with Navy/Marine Corps Relief for your spouse?
- ___ Does your family know your complete, official mailing address and social security number?
- ___ Does your family know how to use Red Cross in case of an emergency?

See your Command Financial Specialist for more information!

Sources of Help for Military Consumers

How to Complain Effectively

- See your Command Financial Specialist for guidance.
- Save all purchase-related paperwork. Include copies of sales receipts, repair orders, warranties, canceled checks, contracts, and any letters to or from the company.
- If you have a problem:
 1. Contact the company that sold you the item or performed the service.
 2. Clearly and calmly describe the problem and the action you would like them to take.
 3. Keep a record of your efforts to resolve the problem. When you write to the company, explain the problem, what you have done so far to try to resolve it, and the solution you are seeking. For example, are you asking for your money back, for the product to be repaired, or for a product exchange?
 4. Send a certified letter with return receipt requested.
- Allow time for the person you contacted to resolve your problem. Keep notes of the name of the person with whom you spoke, the date, and what was said and done. Don't give up until you are satisfied. Use the resource list on the reverse side of this page for consumer protection contacts.
- Keep copies of your letter and all related documents!

(Your Address)
(Your City, State, ZIP)
(Date)

(Name of Contact Person, if available)
(Title, if available)
(Company Name)
(Consumer Complaint Division, if you have no contact person)
(Street Address)
(City, State, ZIP Code)

Dear (Contact Person):
On (date), I (bought, leased, rented, or had repaired) a (name of the product with serial or model or service performed) at (location, date, and other important details of the transaction).
Unfortunately, your product (or service) has not performed well (or the service was inadequate) because (state the problem). I am disappointed because (explain the problem: for example, the product does not work properly, the service was not performed correctly, I was billed the wrong amount, something was not disclosed clearly or was misrepresented, etc.).
To resolve the problem, I would appreciate (state the specific action you want — money back, charge card credited, repair, exchange, etc.). Enclosed are copies (do not send originals) of my records (include receipts, guarantees, warranties, cancelled checks, contracts, model and serial numbers, and any other documents).
I look forward to your reply and a resolution to my problem, and will wait until (set a time limit) before seeking help from a consumer protection agency or the Better Business Bureau. Please contact me at the above address or by phone at (home and/or office number with area codes).

Sincerely,
(your name)

Enclosure(s)
cc: (reference to whom you are sending a copy of this letter)

Sample Complaint Letter

To remove your name from solicitation lists, write:

- Junk Mail:** Preference Service, The Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008
- Telemarketing:** Telephone Preference Service, The Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 9014 Farmingdale, NY 11735-9014
- Credit Bureaus:** Ask to be put on their "opt out" lists. (See phone numbers on the opposite side.)
- Non-Compliance:** Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC 20580

Helpful Internet Sites:

National Consumers League - www.natconsumersleague.org
Internet Fraud Watch - www.fraud.org
ConsumerWorld, consumer information - www.consumerworld.org
National Better Business Bureau - www.bbb.com

Consumer Protection Agencies

Offer consumer advice and guidance; protection against unfair trade practices; processing and investigation of consumer complaints.

Websites:

www.consumer.gov: This site is a gateway to other US consumer protection sites.
www.govftc/consumer.htm: This site is the Bureau of Consumer Protection homepage.
www.consumeraid.org: This site provides information about debt collection, credit report errors, and useful information about contracts.

Better Business Bureau

Offers consumer resource services; complaints and investigations.
Website: www.betterbusinessbureau.com

Credit Reporting Agencies

Offer information pertaining to credit history of individuals and businesses.
Experian (formerly TRW)

1-888-397-3742 • www.experian.com
TransUnion
1-800-916-8800 • www.transunion.com
Equifax Inform
1-800-685-1111 • www.equifax.com

Financial Counseling Programs

Command Financial Specialists... check with your command. Offer free financial management guidance, credit counseling, and consumer education services.

Consumer Credit Counseling Services

Website: www.cccs.nccf.org

Navy Legal Services (Legal Assistance)

Offers no-cost advice and guidance to military personnel and their family members; wills and powers of attorney.
Contact the Navy Legal Services Office at your local installation.

Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Board

Where available, they investigate service member complaints and can put businesses off-limits.

Emergency Financial Assistance

American Red Cross
Website: www.redcross.org
Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society
Website: www.nmcrs.org

Military Credit Unions

Offer only simple interest loans and budget counseling. Call to compare rates and services.



Monthly Budget Worksheet

MONTHLY INCOME	CURRENT	PROJECTED	REMARKS
Base Pay (O/E - Yrs) ¹			¹ Pay entitlements are taxable. Allowance entitlements are non-taxable.
Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)			
Basic Allowance Subsistence (BAS)			
Sea Pay ¹			
Other (FSA, Special Pays, etc.) ¹			
Other ¹			
TOTAL PAY			
Federal Income Tax (FITW) (M/S____)			² Only include this dollar figure if this money is paid to your household.
Social Security (FICA)			
Medicare (FICA)			
Servicemen's Group Life Insurance			
State Income Tax (SITW)			
Other (Navy Home Assessment)			
Tricare Dental			
Advance Pay (APA/Ends____)			
Overpayments (Ends____)			
Allotments			
(Ends)			
(Ends)			
(Ends)			
(Ends)			
(Ends)			
(Ends)			
(Ends)			
(Ends)			
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS			
SERVICE MEMBER'S TAKE-HOME PAY			³ Include with indebtedness on other side.
Other Take-Home Pay (i.e. Part-time work)			
Spouse's Take-Home Pay ¹			
Dependent Allotment ²			
Other (debt allotments) ³			
TOTAL NET MONTHLY INCOME (Box 1)			

MONTHLY LIVING EXPENSES					
Category	Current	Projected	Category	Current	Projected
Savings			Child Care/Babysitting		
Rent/Mortgage			Amusement (movies, videos, hobbies)		
Electricity/Gas			Personal Hygiene (haircuts/perms)		
Water/Sewage/Garbage			Eating Out (lunches, dinner, fast food)		
Insurance (home owner's/renter's/life)			Cable		
Food (groceries/commissary)			Pet Care (vet, grooming)		
Car Payment(s)			Medical/Dental (prescriptions, bills)		
Car Insurance			Postage, Money Orders		
Car Maintenance/Repairs			Alcohol/Cigarettes		
Gasoline			Gifts/Cards		
Phone (local/long distance)			Contributions (churches/charities)		
Clothing			Other:		
Laundry/Dry Cleaning			Other:		
Job Gedunk (soda, coffee, candy, etc.)			Other:		
School (tuition, lunch, books, supplies)			TOTAL MONTHLY LIVING EXPENSES (Box 2)		
Indebtedness Creditors (charge cards/loans)	Monthly Payment	Projected Payment	Balance	Interest Rate	Remarks/Status (current/past due)
Car Payment #1					
TOTAL MONTHLY LIVING EXPENSES (Box 3)					
	Current	Projected			
TOTAL NET INCOME (Box 1)					
MINUS Living Expenses (Box 2)					
MINUS Monthly Debt Payments (Box 3)					
MONTHLY SURPLUS/DEFICIT					